



Barbara Johnson

November 8, 1933 - October 29, 2020

Barbara Rosemary Johnson of Medford, Oregon, devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and friend passed away peacefully on October 29, 2020. She was 86 years old.

Barbara was born November 8, 1933 in Lithgow, New South Wales, Australia and was the only child of Robert (Bob) and Marjorie Polglase. She graduated from the University of Sydney with a double major in Music and Geography and taught Music and Geography at the high school level in Australia for two years. In 1957 she traveled to London, England and accepted a teaching job.

While in England she went on a blind date with Eldon Johnson, who was serving in the US Air Force in Oxfordshire. Their first date was the last concert conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham of the Royal Philharmonic in March of 1957. They were married less than six months later on August 3, 1957 in John Wesley's Chapel in London. After being discharged from the Air Force, Eldon moved to Portland, Oregon, where Barbara joined him almost three months later on October 29, 1957.

In 1962, Eldon and Barbara moved to Medford and started Beaver Electric and Plumbing, now Grover Electric. The business changed and grew over the years, and in 1984 they purchased Perry Electric and Plumbing in North Bend and expanded to Roseburg in 1988.

Barbara was more than just a stay-at-home mom, serving as President of the local West Side Elementary School PTA, a member of Beta Sigma Phi (including serving as President of the Inter-City-Council), and a member of the Medford Junior Women's Club. She was also involved in Girl Scouts, sang in several choirs at the Medford First United Methodist Church, and played the piano at every West Side Elementary School choir concert for many years. She became a naturalized citizen of the United States in November 1965.

Barbara's love of music was evident in everything she did. She joined the Britt Music Festival in 1964, serving for 30 years and holding every position on the Board of Directors, including Treasurer for 15 years. She was a charter member of the Rogue Valley Symphony Guild and a founding board member of Chamber Music Concerts in Ashland. After leaving the Britt Festival she became the Treasurer of both the Rogue Valley Symphony and the Rogue Valley Chorale Boards of Directors. She was also a member of the Rogue Valley Chorale and sang with the group for almost 40 years. Barbara and Eldon enjoyed many overseas chorale trips, her favorite trip being in 2006 when the Chorale was chosen to represent Oregon at the Mozart Festival in Salzburg, Austria celebrating the 250th Anniversary of Mozart's birth.

In 1977, Eldon became an Oregon State Legislator and their lives changed overnight. They lived in both Medford and Salem, with Barbara often being home in Medford while Eldon tended to legislative duties in Salem. She worked in his Salem office for two sessions and managed his Medford office for many years.

In 1981, with her children grown, Barbara returned to college. She graduated from Southern Oregon State College (now SOU) with a degree in Business and became a Certified Public Accountant in 1987. She joined Eldon at their business where she served as Chief Financial Officer for 15 years until the business closed in 2010.

Barbara enjoyed working in the garden, with their home surrounded by thousands of daffodils, hundreds of bearded irises, and dozens of rhododendrons. In 2000, Barbara and Eldon traveled to the Netherlands to visit the Keukenhof Gardens at the peak of the daffodil and tulip season. Together they planned their own Cathedrals and Gardens tour of England in 2002. The garden highlight of that trip was a visit to the Exbury Gardens in Southern England, world famous for their rhododendrons and azaleas. They also traveled to South America, the Galapagos Islands, Greece, Italy, and Spain and made several trips to Australia.

Barbara's favorite phrase was "we cannot live without music in our lives." She lived her life surrounded by music – performing, attending shows, volunteering and financially supporting local music organizations for over 50 years.

Eldon and Barbara retired to the Rogue Valley Manor in the spring of 2012 where they continued to enjoy a full life, attending many local music performances in the area. Their support of these performing arts organizations was the highlight of Barbara's life.

Barbara is survived by her daughter, Karen Okada (Dave), of Keizer, Oregon; son, Robert (Debi), of Napa, California; and four grandchildren: Micah and Emily Johnson; and Andy and Danny Okada. She was preceded in death by her husband of 58 years, Eldon Johnson (2015), parents Robert and Marjorie Polglase, and daughter-in-law Rosann Johnson.

Barbara requested no services, and in lieu of flowers, donations be made to The Salvation Army, 304 Beatty Street, Medford, OR 97501.